

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-20

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DRAFTED BY: ARA/PAN: SMBELL

APPROVED BY: S/AB: AMB. BUNKER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

GOVERNOR PANCANAL

USCINCSO

SECRETARY PANCANALCO WASH DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 217609

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH PANAMA

REFERENCE: STATE 205643

1. ON HIS RETURN FROM CONSULTATIONS IN PANAMA AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ REVILLA ADVISED THAT, ALTHOUGH THE GOP HAD ASKED AMBASSADOR BUNKER TO POSTPONE HIS VISIT FROM EARLY NOVEMBER UNTIL AFTER NOVEMBER 20 IN ORDER TO FIT THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S SCHEDULE, IT WOULD NOW PREFER THAT HE VISIT PANAMA EARLIER THAN NOVEMBER 20 OR, IF HE COULD NOT CONVENIENTLY DO SO, THEN IN EARLY DECEMBER IN ORDER TO FIT GENERAL TORRIJOS' TRAVEL SCHEDULE (ARGENTINA AND PERU).

2. DEPUTY FOR PANAMA NEGOTIATIONS REPLIED THAT AMBASSADOR BUNKER HAD BEEN HAPPY TO ACCOMMODATE FOREIGN MINISTER BUT, CONFIDENTIAL

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HAVING ACCOMMODATED, HAD UNDERTAKEN COMMITMENTS IN THE

UNITED STATES WHICH WOULD PRECLUDE DEPARTURE UNTIL AFTER NOVEMBER 20. AMBASSADOR BUNKER WOULD BE HAPPY TO ACCOMMODATE THE GOP FURTHER BY POSTPONING HIS VISIT UNTIL THE EARLY DAYS OF DECEMBER. HOWEVER, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THE U.S. HAD ALWAYS ACQUIESCED IN THE GOP'S WISH THAT NEGOTIATIONS BE CONFINED TO THE TWO CHIEF NEGOTIATORS SO THAT FOR THE U.S. THE MATTER OF GENERAL TORRIJOS' PRESENCE IN OR ABSENCE FROM PANAMA DURING THIS VISIT WAS NOT RELEVANT. AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ SAID HE UNDERSTOOD AND WOULD AGAIN CONSULT.

3. FROM THE U.S. VIEWPOINT A POSTPONEMENT UNTIL EARLY DECEMBER WOULD HAVE HAD ADVANTAGES. THE U.S. WOULD HAVE ACCOMMODATED PANAMA TWICE; TORRIJOS WOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE TO "DROP IN" AT CONTADORA FOR A TALK WITH THE AMBASSADOR; AND THE VISIT WOULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN CLOSER PROXIMITY TO THE JANUARY 9 ANNIVERSARY OF THE STUDENT RIOTS AND HENCE HAVE BEEN MORE HELPFUL AS A SYMBOL OF "PROGRESS" FOR TORRIJOS TO SHOW TO HIS PEOPLE.

4. AFTER CONSULTATION, HOWEVER, AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ ADVISED THAT "DECEMBER IS TOO LATE" AND THE GOP WOULD PREFER THAT AMBASSADOR BUNKER HOLD TO THE LATE-NOVEMBER SCHEDULE. THEREUPON WE CONFIRMED ARRIVAL FOR NOVEMBER 25 OR 26. ANOTHER PANAMANIAN EMBASSY OFFICER ALLOWED US TO INFER THAT TORRIJOS MAY ATTEMPT TO REARRANGE HIS SCHEDULE SO AS TO BE ABLE TO SPEND AT LEAST A FEW HOURS WITH AMBASSADOR BUNKER. RUSH

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